Cat Scratch Fever

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by slashyrogue

Summary

Hannibal worries that Artemis may be allergic to Will's dogs and Will comes to a realization while fending off Hannibal's most ferocious defender.

Hannibal was conflicted.

Artemis had recently begun to itch the week Will's sessions began again and he didn't wish to blame him but the signs were starting to point his way.

She always stopped once he'd showered but if he took too long she pressed on.

The veterinarian said it may be dry skin despite Hannibal's insistence he used very expensive feline hair care shampoos.

He had admitted she could be allergic to dogs once he'd mentioned having an acquaintance with several.

“It’s possible. I can give you some anti inflammatory meds for her but she’s pretty young. I don’t know that she’d take them.”

Hannibal took and filled the medication anyway.

Better safe than sorry.

Now with Will across from him he still worried.

“....and Jack said I could...hey are you listening?”

Hannibal blinked. “I apologize. I’m a bit preoccupied.”

Will leaned forward. “What’s wrong?”

For a moment he considered feigning relationship trouble but instead told the truth.

“I think perhaps Artemis is allergic to your dogs.”

Will blinked. “Oh.”

“I know you keep them well groomed and clean but pet dander can get on clothes quite easily. You are the only other pet owner I am in contact with.”

Will moved back in his chair and scratched his cheek. “You want me to shower before I come by?”

“I don’t wish to inconvenience you.”

He shrugged. “It’s fine. I mean I’ve got lots of dogs so if it’s my fault your cat’s sick I’d like to help.”

Hannibal smiled. “I appreciate your help with this. I must admit I did not expect owning a pet to be so complicated.”

Will smiled. “It happens. I’ve had two or three of mine allergic to food so I totally understand. I should probably go before I spread any more dander on you.”

He frowned. “Yes, that’s probably best.”

“Goodnight, Dr. Lecter.”

The minute he left Hannibal almost wished he hadn’t spoken at all now that their session had been cut short. Will was his last evening patient so he didn’t have to dwell long on the loss. He locked up and drove home anticipating the destruction Artemis may have left for him.

He opened the door and the silence that echoed back was ominous.

“Artemis?”

The telltale sound of her collar bell jingling didn’t come in response and Hannibal’s heart raced as he called out again.

“Artemis come here this instant!”

He rushed through the house towards the kitchen where he pulled out the container of cat treats shaking them.

A soft meow came in response and he followed the sound into his bedroom.

“Artemis?”

He shook the treats again and saw his closet door ajar.

“You better not have knocked down my suits again.”

When he opened the door and saw her sitting inside amidst a pile of fabric he smiled. “What are you--?”

She meowed again as he held out a treat only to reveal the pile of fabric were ties.

All of his ties.

She’d shredded them quite thoroughly and when Hannibal moved his suits back to reveal the rack he saw there were none left unscathed.

He held the ruined ties and sighed.

“Well it is time for a change I suppose.”

Artemis licked his fingers and rubbed against his hand as Hannibal fed her an additional treat.

“I am happy to see you in good spirits.”

She purred and he picked her up in attempt to leave the bedroom only for her to jump onto his bed. She padded across his comforter with her tiny claws and began to suck on the fabric. He sat on the bed and pet across her head as she worked.

It was an instinctual soothing behavior and also what could be construed as a happy one.

“I will take this as a sign that you need more toys to divert your attentions during the day.”

Artemis let the blanket fall from her mouth and climbed into his lap where she rubbed against his suit only to sneeze again.

He sighed.

“Will is going to try to clean off the fur,” he promised, “And we will give you the medication.”

She looked up at him suddenly and he knew her attention was on dinner.

“I think it’s time to eat.”

They left his room and Hannibal began to cook his own dinner. He preferred to eat together and she knew this, of course she did, but he knew it would take time for her to get used to the schedule.

He carried their two meals over to the table after and sat down. Artemis hopped onto the table and he presented her with her tiny bowl.

These meals felt somewhat unfinished every time he imagined Will on his other side. He thought for a moment about the dogs and wondered if keeping them caged would work for Artemis's health but worried it would not.

"It's not as if Will seems inclined to start a developing relationship with me," he said, taking a bite of his food, "But I still feel as if he will be soon."

Artemis lifted her head and meowed, her face covered in food.

"Yes, I suppose dwelling on it seems unimportant at the moment."

She meowed again and went back to eating as if that had been her retort.

Hannibal waited until she'd finished to clear their dishes and was in the midst of washing them when the doorbell rang.

He glanced at the clock on the wall behind him and saw it was past seven.

Hannibal frowned and felt Artemis rub at his ankle.

"It seems we have a visitor."

He picked her up before he headed to the door and stopped to peer outside.

Will.

Hannibal opened the door and saw Will who looked rather sheepish. "Hi."

“Hello. Is everything all right?”

He tugged at his shirtsleeve and laughed nervously. “I seem to keep showing up like this.”

“It’s quite—“

Will grabbed the front of his jacket and pulled Hannibal into him hard. The force of his strength surprised Hannibal as did the kiss that followed.

It was very focused, a kiss of intention, and the memories of their first rose up in him though this felt more important.

He felt Artemis wiggle in his arm and gently disentangled himself from Will. The flushed cheeks and swollen lips that he saw made Hannibal smile.

“I take it you’re less against a relationship now? Or is this another mistake?”

Will shook his head. “I thought about how I was planning on doing all this shit to make your cat happy and realized that all I want is to make you happy more. I...I know we don’t know each other that well but…”

Hannibal moved Artemis to his other arm.

“We can get to know each other, Will. There’s no reason why we can’t explore more than our attraction. I for one would very much like to get to know you and everything about you.”

Will smiled. “About you being my therapist…”

Hannibal took his hand and kissed it.

“We’re just having conversations. There is no reason why I need to stop being your paddle in rough waters.”

Will licked his lips and reached out to scratch behind Artemis’s ears. She swatted at him and wriggled from Hannibal’s hold, jumping to the floor before taking off.

“I don’t think she likes me.”

“She’s jealous,” Hannibal purred, “It’s not uncommon for pets to be jealous of—“

Will stepped forward and kissed him again, slower this time. His glasses brushed against Hannibal’s skin and he found he liked the feeling. When they pulled back to catch their breaths Artemis was now growling.

“Can I come in?”

Hannibal looked down at Artemis. “Yes, if you aren’t turned away by rude behaving kittens.”

He held out his hand again and Artemis bit him, though it was much lighter than she’d already swatted. Will chuckled. “I think I can handle a little teeth.”

He licked his lips. “We were just having dinner. I always make more than I need to for just myself if you wanted to join us.”

Will nodded and pulled off his glasses. “I think I’d like to join you, if that’s ok.”

Hannibal stepped back and Will came inside. He shut the door behind him just as Artemis moved towards him. She arched her back when Will closer and stood between them.

“I apologize, she--”

Will laughed. “It’s cute, really. I mean, she wants your attention all to herself,” he looked at Hannibal and a fetching flush came to his cheeks, “I know the feeling.”

“I confess I find I am no longer hungry.”

“I’m not either.”

They came forward at nearly the same time and stopped just short of touching. He reached out and brushed his fingers over Will’s cheek. “At least not for food.”

Will leaned into the touch and winced after a moment.

“Will?”

Both of them looked down to see Artemis had sunk her nails into Will’s foot.

“Artemis, no!”

She scampered off just far enough to feel safe but still watched them.

“Will, I….”

He shook his head, “I think I’m gonna have to get thicker socks or find out how to make her like me.”

Hannibal bent down and looked at his foot. He could feel the blood on the sock and was rather impressed Artemis had inflicted such pain in so short a time. “I have a first aid kit in the bathroom. Come and let me fix this for you.”

He looked up at Will from the floor and the obvious desire in Will’s eyes made him remember their previous encounter.

“Is there one in the bathroom upstairs?”

“Yes, in my bedroom.”

“I think I can make it to your bedroom.”

The walk to his bedroom was silent and Will stayed a few steps behind him all the way. He felt oddly flustered when he headed into the bathroom and even more so when he returned to find Will draped across his bed with his bare feet on display.

“I have never thought myself to be much of a foot fetishist but suddenly I find appreciation in them.”

Will smiled. “I’m more of an ass man, myself.”

Hannibal felt another wave of want hit him as he ran the antiseptic swab over Will’s foot.

“Yes, I remember.”

He heard Will’s intaked breath. “Hannibal I---”

“If you think it best we take things slowly I am more than amenable as long I know we are taking things towards something. Issues or not, I quite enjoy our friendship and am very attracted to you.”

Will's fingers brushed his hand. "I told you before my issues have issues but I…"

Hannibal looked up. "Artemis is not a very nice dinner companion but she is no replacement for you."

"I'd like to stay," Will said softly, "For dinner. Even if I run risk of developing cat scratch fever."

"I will protect you."

Will smiled. "I know you will, even against the kitty who has you wrapped around her tiny paws."

Hannibal pressed a bandage to his scratched foot and leaned in closer.

"She may have me wrapped around her paws but you stole my heart long before she came into my life."

Will let out a long breath. "We'd better get out of this room before we rush things again."

"Rational thought seems to have left me."

"Hannibal…"

They fell into each other's arms, desperate and pulling at clothes without much thought to the state of the fabrics after. Hannibal was a mess of need and want, arching into Will with reckless wanton abandon, and when it was over they were breathless lying against each other on the rustled bedsheets.

Will was still half wearing his shirt, and Hannibal had pants around his ankles but found no need to move with Will running fingers through his hair.

"Mmm….so I guess we're not going slow then?"

He smiled. "Sometimes giving in is the best option."

"I've never given in much to my desires before now," Will confessed, "Not when I've felt so wrong for so long."

"Different doesn't always equal wrong."

He felt Will's kiss to his forehead. "I guess you….what is that noise?"

They were both silent for a moment before he heard the noise in question. Rustling and mewling echoed from the other side of his bedroom door.

"Artemis is feeling excluded."

Will laughed. "I don't know if it's such a good idea to let her in when I've got this much skin to attack."

Hannibal sighed. "She's used to the run of the house."

"And all your attention."

"The transition will be difficult."

“I think I can handle it.”

“I meant for her.”

“I can try making her something the next time I come over? I just recently caught some fish that I can make into some treats like I do for the dogs?”

Hannibal pressed a kiss to his bare chest. “That’s very thoughtful of you. I will make your pets something in return. I have some very fresh meat I just procured that would make for fine dog biscuits.”

“What kind of meat?”

“Pork.”

“I think they’ll like that. I mean who could say no to anything you offer them?”

Hannibal brushed hand through his chest hair. “You.”

“Not anymore.”

Artemis continued to meow and scratch. “I’m not sure I can listen much longer without letting her inside.”

Will smiled. “Let her in. I can take it.”

Hannibal got up from the bed, kicked off the rest of his clothes, and opened the door. Artemis gave him an indignant look before she ran into the room. He held his breath as she jumped onto the bed and stared at Will.

He held out his hand and she sniffed it, then looked back at him.

“I smell like you and it’s confusing her.”

Hannibal came over to the bed and ran his hand over her back. She then plopped down and rolled onto her side.

“So far so good.”

He climbed in beside Will who tossed a shirt to the floor.

“I will just have to keep smelling like you for a long, long time I guess.”

“That is an excellent idea.”

Hannibal lay against his chest and looked down at Artemis who still watched them warily. She looked back and forth between them for a moment before rising again. He was not at all surprised when she began to smush her way between them until Hannibal lay on back with her curled on his chest.

Will moved to pet her again and she hissed at him.

“It’s a learning curve,” Hannibal murmured, petting her, “But we’ll get there….together.”

He felt Will take his hand and squeeze their palms together.

“Sounds good to me.”

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